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The Future of Distributed Groups and their Use of Social Media

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Abstract. Distributed team field research has shown that shared group awareness, coordination and informal communication are the most common ways for teams to inform each other of progress. In addition, we have observed that poorly documented, informal communication causes a fragmented workday due to frequent interruptions and knowledge loss due to the passage of time and team attrition. Because informal communication has both advantages and disadvantages for information sharing, it merits deeper study to allow any proposed solution to preserve the good while reducing the bad. Over the past several years, we have conducted a series of studies at Microsoft Corporation and beyond to document the nature of group conversations and communications. Based on surveys, lab studies, field studies and interviews, we have begun to develop a suite of tools that allow groups, both co-located and distributed, to stay more aware of their colleagues' actions, get on board to a new team more efficiently, and engage with each other at the most optimal times. Examples of many of these tools will be discussed, as will our progress in transitioning these ideas into real products.

Short Biography

Bio: Mary Czerwinski is a Research Area Manager at Microsoft Research, where she manages many diverse areas of human-computer interaction, including social computing, information visualization, CSCW, sensor-based interaction and healthcare. Mary has been an avid participant in the ACM SIGCHI community, sitting on the SIGCHI Executive Committee for the last 10 years, chairing CHI 2008, UIST 2005, Papers Chair for CHI 2000 and UIST 2010, in addition to many other conference volunteer roles. Mary was recently awarded the ACM SIGCHI Lifetime Service award and was also inducted into the ACM CHI Academy. Mary has ~100 publications in HCI and psychology, and holds a PhD in Cognitive Psychology. Mary is very involved in supporting academia as well, sitting on multiple university advisory boards and PhD student dissertation committees.